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Multilingualism

Multilingualism

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report, which is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 61/266, provides an update on the various activities undertaken to promote multilingualism since the submission of the previous report in this subject (A/61/317).

In fostering diversity and plurality within the United Nations, efforts to promote multilingualism are vital. The current review shows that, through a number of initiatives, progress has been achieved in the promotion of multilingualism in the areas of conference management, internal communications, public information and outreach and human resources management.

The launch of the International Year of Languages in February 2008 presented an additional opportunity to focus on multilingualism. The extensive programme of activities undertaken to mark the Year, which is covered in a separate report, is expected to have a lasting effect and will foster the mainstreaming of language issues in United Nations programmes and internationally.

* A/63/150 and Corr.1.

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I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted in follow-up to General Assembly resolution 61/266, in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit to it, at its sixty-third session, a comprehensive report on the implementation of its resolutions on multilingualism. The Assembly also invited the Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) to report to it on the impact of the activities carried out during the International Year of Languages.

2. During the sixty-second session, the General Assembly considered other subjects related to multilingualism, including budget (resolutions 62/235 A-B and 62/237 A-C), human resources management (62/248), pattern of conferences (62/225) and questions relating to information (62/111 A-B, 62/182). Ensuring parity among the six official languages is a priority for the Secretariat, and 2008, as International Year of Languages, provided the opportunity to give centre stage to the issue of multilingualism.

3. The present report, which provides an update on the various activities undertaken to promote multilingualism since the submission of the previous report on this subject (A/61/317), includes a midterm review of activities organized to mark the International Year of Languages.

II. Multilingualism at the United Nations

A. Coordination of multilingualism

4. In response to the request of the General Assembly in its resolution 61/266, the Secretary-General appointed the Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information as Coordinator for multilingualism on 29 May 2008.

5. The Department of Public Information took on a coordination role and worked with the network of focal points designated in all relevant Departments on issues related to multilingualism.

B. Conference management

1. Conference services

6. **Provision of optimal quality conference management services**: as the entity within the Secretariat entrusted with overall responsibility for ensuring effective communication among Member States, the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management is fully committed to multilingualism as the animating principle of all its policies and services. In providing high quality conference-servicing support to the intergovernmental machinery, the Department is mindful of the need to ensure that all six official languages are given equal treatment, as mandated by the General Assembly.

7. Pursuant to a request by the General Assembly in its resolution 62/225 that the Secretary-General take measures to improve the planning of conference resource allocations with a view to ensuring that the bodies entitled to meet "as required"

receive adequate conference services,[1] as at 1 January 2007, the Department put in place a strategic reserve of three additional meetings per week specifically in order to accommodate such bodies. It is clear from the statistical data on the provision of interpretation services to meetings of regional and other major groupings of Member States (see table 1) that such a reserve is in fact having a positive effect on the ability of the Department to provide such services. However, the provision of services varies greatly by duty station: the overwhelming majority of requests for interpretation services for informal meetings are met at Headquarters. At the other duty stations, response to these requests is a function of the budget allocated for conference services and meetings on the calendar.

Table 1
Statistics on provision of conference services to regional and other major groupings of Member States in New York, Geneva, Nairobi and Vienna

	2007				
	Meetings with interpretation services			*Meetings without interpretation services*	
Grouping	*Requested*	*Provided*	*Not provided*	*Requested*	*Provided*
New York	219	191	28	881	881
Geneva	89	65	24	1 086	888
Vienna	0	0	0	259	259
Nairobi	10	10	0	203	203

Source: A/63/119.

8. **Demographic transition in language services**: in attempting to deal with the ongoing demographic transition brought about by the high number of retirements and the large numbers of new recruits in language positions, the Department has initiated a programme of outreach to universities and other institutions training language specialists and has engaged in an ambitious training venture to prepare serving staff to assume increased responsibilities resulting from the retirement of seasoned language staff.

9. The Department has developed succession planning covering the period 2006-2011 and has devised a schedule of competitive examinations, which are discussed and finalized with the Examinations and Tests Section of the Office of Human Resources Management at annual planning meetings. The Department relies on the ability of the Office of Human Resources Management to conduct competitive examinations to fill its vacant language posts. Limited resources in that Office may have an impact on the Department's work capacity.

10. **Evaluation of the performance of the Department by Member States**: in response to requests by Member States, the Department has developed various tools to elicit the opinions of its clients on the quality of services provided by its staff. A client satisfaction survey was circulated during the sixty-second session of the General Assembly in all six official languages, principally during meetings of the Security Council and the Main Committees of the General Assembly. The 41 per cent

[1] Resolution 62/225, sect. II.A, para. 7.

response rate to that survey was considerably higher than in previous years (13 per cent in 2006; 19 per cent in 2005; and 20 per cent in 2004). According to survey results, Department services were rated excellent or good by 81 per cent, fair by 16 per cent and poor or very poor by less than 3 per cent of respondents. The three main expectations identified were timely issuance of documents, good customer service and good quality of interpretation. The Department continues to explore innovative ways to collect and analyse feedback. A database was developed to collect ad hoc feedback on the quality of services through various means, including by telephone, e-mail, in person or through regular mail.

11. As mandated by the General Assembly, the Department has been holding two rounds of informational meetings every year with Member States at Headquarters and at other duty stations, including at the United Nations Office at Geneva. Such meetings afford Member States an opportunity to discuss a range of issues relating to the implementation of the principle of multilingualism in all areas of the Department and have proven to be a very valuable forum for the staff of the Department to gauge the opinions of delegates and provide them with useful information on the dependencies language staff face in the performance of their duties.

2. Official documentation

12. In addition to the proactive document-management actions proposed to address various impediments to achieving the mandated full compliance with the 10-week and 6-week rules for the issuance of pre-session documents, including limited late slotting and re-slotting, the Department remains committed to enforcing strict compliance with the rule governing simultaneous distribution of documents in the six official languages for all documents of deliberating bodies, with such documents being uploaded on the Official Document System (ODS) and posted, where applicable, only when issued in all six official languages.

13. Progress has been achieved in uploading older United Nations documents to ODS. The retroactive digitization programme for documents earlier than 1993, led by the Dag Hammarskjöld Library of the Department of Public Information, has focused on the Security Council, with the objective of digitizing all major Security Council documents in all six official languages by the end of March 2009. Close cooperation with the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management has increased the speed of digitization and has also prevented duplication of work.

C. Internal communications

14. The Secretariat Intranet, iSeek, is now the primary source of information for United Nations staff at all duty stations. This internal communications tool, which ensures that staff share information and knowledge within and across departments, offices and duty stations, is available in English and French, and video and radio programmes in all official languages are featured on a regular basis.

D. Public information and outreach

15. The mission of the Department of Public Information is to strategically communicate the activities and concerns of the Organization to achieve the greatest possible impact. By partnering with key intermediaries, including the press, non-governmental organizations and educational institutions, the Department raises support for the Organization. To further expand the global audience for its products and activities, the Department uses traditional and new means of communications, including radio, television and the Internet, and engages local populations through its network of United Nations information centres.

1. Press releases

16. During the reporting period, fast, accurate, balanced and comprehensive coverage of intergovernmental meetings and conferences continued to be provided in English and French through press releases, in hard copy and on the website. From July 2006 to June 2008, 8,671 press releases were issued, totalling some 41,600 pages. A higher number of press releases was issued in English, although the number of press releases issued in French also increased.

17. To respond to the interest expressed by Member States in the possibility of expanding the press release service to the other official languages, the Department studied and proposed a range of options, including an overview of the costs involved.

Table 2
Number of press releases pages: 2006-2007

	No. of press release pages 1 July 2006-30 June 2007	*No. of press release pages 1 July 2007-30 June 2008*	*Total*
English	12 475	12 464	24 949
French	8 191	8 470	16 661
Total	**20 666**	**20 934**	

2. Radio and television

18. In its continuing efforts to expand the reach of its multilingual programming, the Department recently contracted a leading audience research organization to provide a list of potential radio partners in 20 countries in Africa and Asia that are transmitting in one or more of the languages in which United Nations Radio's broadcasts are produced. The Department is now contacting potential stations identified by the study to promote the use of its programmes. Distribution to francophone Africa is also under way, targeting 200 private, commercial and community radio stations using the WorldSpace Afristar satellite and the Radio France Internationale OrdiSpace download system.

19. Working consistently to refine formats of its programmes and offer broadcasters more flexibility and convenience, United Nations Radio has begun to shift away from offering exclusively packaged programmes, instead providing frequent short news reports and access to raw audio. This approach has already been effectively used in Spanish, replicating the success of the United Nations Radio

News Service, a United Nations Foundation pilot project that focuses on the North American market, offering short news reports and sound bites to radio stations over the web.

20. A new monthly television programme, 21st Century, provides an opportunity to expand the global audience for United Nations Television. The programme features high-quality human interest stories, easily adaptable to language versions, reflecting some of the most important global issues engaging the United Nations family. The programme is carried by a number of broadcasting companies, including BBC World, TVE (Spain), CCTV, Bhutan Broadcasting Service, Deutsche Welle, DK4 (Denmark), France 24, Kenya Broadcasting Corporation, Namibia Broadcasting Corporation, SABC Africa, Viet Nam Television, TV3 Ghana and the Africa Channel, with many other stations showing interest in the new format.

21. Another popular series, United Nations in Action, is produced in English, French, Russian and Spanish, and broadcast in English in 21 countries, in French in 9 countries, in Russian in 4 countries and in Spanish in 6 countries.

Table 3
United Nations Radio and United Nations Television partnerships

	June 2004 (baseline)		*December 2005 (actual)*		*June 2006 (actual)*		*December 2006 (estimated)*		*December 2007 (estimated)*		*July 2008 (actual)*		*December 2008/2009 (estimates +5%)*	
No. television stations	108		136		138		137		163		173		172	
No. radio stations	160		181		190		199		202		228		213	
Total No. television and radio stations	**268**		**317**		**328**		**336**		**365**		**407**		**384**	
	TV	**Radio**	**TV**	**Radio**	**TV**	**Radio**	**TV**	**Radio**	**TV**	**Radio**	**TV**	**Radio**	**TV**	**Radio**
Africa	8	51	30	47	30	51	44	54	48	60	49	64	51	63
Asia and Pacific	10	10	22	10	27	12	17	13	20	15	22	20	21	16
Europe	20	13	23	17	23	19	19	21	25	25	27	23	27	27
Latin America and Caribbean	8	59	10	66	10	66	8	69	11	72	12	75	12	76
North America	27	15	34	23	29	24	25	24	30	27	30	29	32	29
Western Asia	3	5	16	11	17	11	21	11	25	14	25	14	27	15
Global reach	1	7	1	7	2	7	3	7	4	9	4	9	5	10
Total No. of countries	51	75	61	71	61	71	63	71	65	76	65	76	69	80
Net total No. countries: television and radio (minus overlap)	**98**		**105**		**105**		**104**		**111**		**112**		**116**	

	June 2004 (baseline)		*December 2005 (actual)*		*June 2006 (actual)*		*December 2006 (estimated)*		*December 2007 (estimated)*		*July 2008 (actual)*		*December 2008/2009 (estimates +5%)*	
	TV	**Radio**	**TV**	**Radio**	**TV**	**Radio**	**TV**	**Radio**	**TV**	**Radio**	**TV**	**Radio**	**TV**	**Radio**
Arabic	10	12	27	16	27	16	21	16	30	18	30	19	32	20
Chinese	6	11	5	12	5	13	3	13	6	12	6	12	7	13
English	57	35	89	39	90	48	77	51	95	60	100	62	100	64
French	14	42	12	44	14	44	27	44	15	47	19	50	16	49
Russian	10	9	9	10	6	10	3	10	12	12	12	11	13	13
Spanish	11	51	9	60	8	60	5	60	12	66	14	67	13	70
Portuguese										18		25		
Kiswahili												13		

3. The United Nations website

22. Since the inception of the United Nations website 13 years ago, the Department has been striving to achieve parity among official languages on the website. Other content-providing offices also face this challenge.

23. On a daily basis, users from more than 212 countries and territories view an average of 1.3 million pages, a fact that underscores the importance of having a truly multilingual website. Much still needs to be done to achieve language parity, but progress has been made, as demonstrated by the latest statistics. From 2006 to 2007, there was a 12.3 per cent increase in visits to www.un.org, with the strongest growth on non-English sites. The Russian website had the largest increase in page views (58.1 per cent), and the Chinese website the largest increase in visits (36.6 per cent).

Table 4
Increase in the number of visits to the United Nations website (www.un.org) across languages: 2006-2007[a]

	Arabic	*Chinese*	*English[b]*	*French[b]*	*Russian*	*Spanish*	*Total*
Page views							
2006	12 346 648	24 203 023	365 400 934	21 065 351	16 335 047	24 540 017	463 891 020
2007	14 238 905	29 260 282	351 913 503	29 609 049	25 747 562	27 069 156	477 838 460
2007 versus 2006 (Percentage)	+15.3	+20.9	-3.7	+40.6	+57.6	+10.3	+3.0
Visits							
2006	2 445 858	4 085 582	28 737 205	4 596 119	2 919 180	6 605 301	49 389 245
2007	2 626 459	5 498 426	29 872 188	5 659 028	3 796 775	6 972 777	54 425 657
2007 versus 2006 (Percentage)	+7.4	+34.6	+3.9	+23.1	+30.1	+5.6	+10.2

[a] Analysis is based on a common benchmark of zero days for all languages.
[b] Due to a change in methodology by which French press releases are now included in the total statistics for the French site, rather than English, there is a significant increase of French page views and visits, and an offsetting decrease in English totals.

24. As part of its responsibilities in providing project management services for many new and existing sites, the Department, in its daily contact with author offices, always emphasizes that they need to make the content of their websites available in all six official languages. However, as far more pages are available in English and offices are continuingly adding pages in that language, the number of new pages in English is still higher than the number of pages added in the other languages. Progress towards language parity therefore remains a difficult challenge, although in some areas, progress has been steady.

25. For example, out of a total of 12,987 web pages created in 2007 by the Web Services Section, over 2,000 new pages were created in each of the official six languages. The production of both new and updated web pages was helped by pro bono partnerships with academic institutions. Zhejiang University in China provided 400 translated pages in Chinese. Minsk State Linguistic University in Belarus translated 259 pages into Russian. The Spanish website had a very high number of pages updated, partially due to services of volunteers and interns as well as to the work of faculty and students at the University of Salamanca in Spain, which delivered 1,893 translated Spanish pages. Quality of the output improved over time as students working on the translations gained familiarity with United Nations terminology. The Department is continuing its efforts to enlist the support of an institution of higher learning for pro bono translations into Arabic. A similar arrangement for translation into French has not been pursued since many offices and departments produce content in that language. Overall, the process of web-page updating is crucial to keeping the United Nations website timely, although the considerable resources required for the effort make the task of working towards achieving linguistic parity even more difficult.

Table 5
New pages created and pages updated in 2007 by the Web Services Section

	Arabic	*Chinese*	*English*	*French*	*Russian*	*Spanish*[a]
New	2 085	2 568	2 024	2 126	2 101	2 083
Updated	4 525	5 680	5 121	4 642	5 414	10 730

[a] The number of updated pages for the Spanish website is very high because the Spanish Language Unit had the services of a number of volunteers and interns during the course of 2007.

26. Additional cost-neutral ways to extend cooperative arrangements with academic institutions for translation of websites are currently being sought, including various opportunities for financing United Nations internships for student translators such as using scholarships from the Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs or the Spanish Ministry of Culture.

27. The availability of official United Nations parliamentary documentation on ODS has also helped make the United Nations website more multilingual. Several major segments of the United Nations website, including those of the General Assembly, the Security Council, the sanctions committees and the Peacebuilding Commission, continually update their pages by posting official United Nations documentation and reports retrieved from ODS. Since links to ODS provide access to documents in all six official languages, this helps to make the United Nations

website a more multilingual experience for users as they search information on the Organization's key areas of work.

28. The General Assembly, in resolution 54/248 E, requested the Secretary-General to ensure that the goal of the equal treatment of the six official languages is taken into account in the course of the continuous development, maintenance and enrichment of United Nations websites. The Department is making every effort, at the planning stage of website development, to draw the attention of heads of offices and departments to their responsibility for making content available in all six official languages, in a timely fashion. One key requirement is the need to allocate funds and make arrangements for quality external translations, without which it may be impossible to deliver website content in all official languages. Full compliance with the goal of website language parity will therefore continue to depend on the availability of funding for quality translations.

29. Users of the United Nations website can access varied multimedia content, including video and audio, in several languages. Webcasting, now available in the language delivered as well as in English, has become an important tool that has enhanced the site's multilingual nature. United Nations webcast gives users around the world live or on demand access to meetings of the Security Council, the General Assembly and other bodies and events, including Headquarters press briefings. In 2007, 16.1 million webcast videos, both live and archived, were viewed, an increase of almost 100 per cent from 8.3 million in 2006. The Department was also instrumental in providing live webcast coverage and on demand access to the workings of the Geneva-based Human Rights Council since its inception in 2006. The Department continues to explore ways to expand its webcast service to meet the demands for multilingualism; sufficient resources would allow it to provide live and on demand webcasts in all six official languages. United Nations Radio programmes on the web are currently available in all six official languages, as well as Kiswahili and Portuguese; they can be accessed in AM radio quality for the public, or high audio quality for broadcasters.

30. The United Nations News Centre portal provides continuing coverage of news in all six official languages. An e-mail news service, available in English and French, provides breaking news stories and reports on developments in the United Nations system to more than 50,000 subscribers around the world. Expansion of this service to the other official languages is pending the acquisition of a new, robust system capable of handling all official languages.

31. The introduction of a web content management system will help the planned implementation of a formal system of web governance, by offering a unified technical infrastructure and a centralized templating mechanism. This will, in turn, simplify content creation, making it easier for Departments and other author offices to publish in all six official languages. An important technological requirement in this context is the need to ensure availability of infrastructure and applications that fully support Latin, non-Latin and bidirectional scripts.

4. United Nations information centres

32. The network of 63 United Nations information centres is key to the Organization's efforts to reach people around the world and share the United Nations story in their own languages. These centres currently have the capacity to

work in 48 languages and have produced information material in over 100 languages. The centres provide local audiences with information about the activities and goals of the Organization using traditional media as well as new information and communications technology. Many centres have formed partnerships with the local broadcast media, as a priority, and several have established ongoing arrangements with local media for a regular newspaper column or page devoted to United Nations issues.

33. Examples below illustrate how the centres reach out to local media in various languages:

(a) The information centre in Asunción arranged for publication of United Nations material in Spanish in major publications, including *ABC Color, Última Hora* and *La Nación*, in their education-related supplement pages;

(b) The information centre in Beirut has an agreement with two Lebanese daily newspapers to provide information material selected by the centre in Arabic for a United Nations supplement page in *Al-Balad* for its Sunday edition, and for a biweekly magazine half-page, "Window on the United Nations", in *Al-Mustaqbal*;

(c) The information centre in Bogotá coordinates a weekly radio programme in Spanish about the work of the United Nations in Colombia. It is broadcast by radio Melodía and two national broadcasters and is disseminated to 730 community radio stations throughout the country, with an estimated audience of 2,500,000 people;

(d) The information centre in Brazzaville regularly provides *UN in Action* programming in French to two television broadcasters in the Congo;

(e) The information centre in Dar es Salaam produces radio programmes in Kiswahili and disseminates them through local radio stations;

(f) The information centre in Mexico City D.F. provides national broadcasters with daily Spanish language news feeds from United Nations Radio and was also instrumental in arranging the broadcasting of *UN in Action* in Spanish on national television in the Dominican Republic (*Antena Latina*, canal 7) with the assistance of the United Nations Association of the Dominican Republic;

(g) The information centre in Moscow has arrangements with *Diplomat*, a Russian-language journal, to publish at least five articles by or interviews with senior United Nations officials and experts each year;

(h) The information centre in Nairobi produces a radio programme in Kiswahili with the Kenya Broadcasting Corporation, which is broadcast daily at primetime, reaching a minimum of nine million listeners;

(i) The information centre in Rio de Janeiro has established a cooperative agreement with Empresa Brasileira de Comunicação, a public broadcasting company, to broadcast United Nations-produced radio programmes in Portuguese as well as the television series *21st Century*.

34. In the latter half of 2007, some 295 media outlets reproduced articles published by the Secretary-General, in large part, through the efforts of the information centres, which translated them into local languages and in placing them in the local media. The article with the highest number of placements, "Why the World has Changed in the United Nations Favour" (June 2007), appeared in 66 media outlets in 41 countries in a total of 21 languages. The second highest-

placement article, on climate change, first published on the opening day of the United Nations Climate Change Conference (December 2007), appeared in 40 countries in a record number of 23 languages. In 2008, articles by the Secretary-General had been published by approximately 250 media outlets as of mid-August. The article that generated the most interest this year, "The Real United Nations" (July 2008), was published by 42 papers in 14 languages. The Secretary-General's call to arms to address the imminent global food crisis in "The New Face of Global Hunger" (March 2008) was published in 41 countries and 14 languages.

35. The United Nations information centres also reach out to wider segments of the public by producing and translating information into local languages. This includes the Department's publications as well as those of the United Nations system and their own locally produced information materials. Among frequently translated publications are: the Charter of the United Nations, the Statute of the International Court of Justice, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, material on the Millennium Development Goals, *UN in Brief, 60 Ways the United Nations Makes a Difference* and "A Stronger United Nations for a Better World: My Priorities as UN Secretary-General":

(a) Currently, 36 information centres produce their own newsletters/bulletins on a weekly, monthly or quarterly basis. These are produced in 16 local languages, namely: Armenian, Azeri, Bahasa Indonesia, Bangla, Czech, Georgian, Hindi, Japanese, Kiswahili, Portuguese, Romanian, Sinhala, Tamil, Turkish, Ukrainian and Urdu;

(b) The Department's information office in Yerevan showcased its locally produced publications in Armenian during an exhibit in April 2008 in connection with the International Year of Languages. To date, that office has produced more than 90 books, bulletins, booklets and posters with an overall print run of 100,000;

(c) The information centre in Accra has made the Universal Declaration of Human Rights available in 11 Ghanaian languages, Asante Twi, Akwapim Twi, Fanti, Ga, Dangbe, Dagbani, Dagaare, Ewe, Gonja, Nzema and Kasem, all of which are available online.

36. In October 2007, in cooperation with the University of Aquino, the information centre in La Paz organized a model United Nations in the Aymara language. The event, which was attended by indigenous, municipal and education authorities in the region, was fully conducted in Aymara, a language spoken by nearly 25 per cent of the Bolivian population, marking the first time ever that a model United Nations was held in the language of an indigenous people.

Wealth of languages

Over the years, the United Nations information centres have translated and produced United Nations materials in over 100 languages.

Since 2006, UNICs translated and produced materials in the following 48 local languages: Armenian, Azeri, Bahasa Indonesia, Bangla, Czech, Danish, Dioula, Dutch, Finnish, Fulfulde, Georgian, German, Greek, Guarani, Hindi, Hungarian, Icelandic, Italian, Japanese, Joola, Kirundi, Kiswahili, Lingala, Mandika, Moore, Myanmar, Nepali, Norwegian, Persian, Polish, Portuguese, Pulaar, Romanian, Sereer, Sesotho, Shona, Sinhala, Slovak, Slovenian, Soninke, Swedish, Tamil, Thai, Turkish, Ukrainian, Urdu, Uzbek and Wolof.

UNICs maintain websites in the following 30 local languages: Armenian, Azeri, Bahasa Indonesia, Bangla, Belarusian, Brazilian Portuguese, Czech, Danish, Dutch, Finnish, German, Greek, Hindi, Hungarian, Icelandic, Italian, Kiswahili, Japanese, Norwegian, Persian, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Slovakian, Slovenian, Swedish, Thai, Turkish, Ukrainian and Urdu.

37. The strengthening of the information centres in Cairo, Mexico City D.F. and Pretoria has led to greater interaction among the centres in those regions. Collective approaches are now taken to specific communications challenges, including: the sharing of tasks such as translation; joint activities to highlight key issues; and assistance in addressing the operational needs and concerns of information centres in neighbouring countries. The centres also lead efforts to bring together regional communications groups to discuss common United Nations communications concerns and opportunities and to develop joint projects.

38. The United Nations information services in Geneva and Vienna and the United Nations Regional Information Centre for Western Europe in Brussels have collaborated in various ways, taking advantage of their respective strengths, information networks and locations. The office in Brussels, has developed, in collaboration with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), a website for the sixtieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights called "Know Your Rights" (http://www.knowyourrights2008.org), launched on Human Rights Day 2007 and available in eight languages (Dutch, English, French, German, Greek, Italian, Portuguese and Spanish). The centre in Brussels produces and translates information about the United Nations in languages other than the official languages of the United Nations and maintains a website in 13 languages. The centre's monthly magazines and newsletters are produced in English, French, Portuguese and German. On a daily basis, the centre provides information materials in Portuguese to all United Nations offices operating in Portuguese-speaking countries, and compiles a press review in English, drawn from 10 local languages. With the generous support of the Government of Belgium, key information material is translated and printed in most of the languages of the region and subtitles are made for United Nations videos.

39. In 2007, in a collaborative project between information technology teams from the Department of Public Information at Headquarters and staff at the centres concerned, 26 websites were developed or revamped for the information centres in developing countries, including 16 in sub-Saharan Africa. All 63 information centres currently have functioning websites offering information in five official languages. The establishment of webmaster positions at key offices in the network — Brussels, Cairo, Mexico City and Pretoria — has further strengthened the Department's virtual team of information technology specialists and its support of websites in local languages.

40. The newly redesigned United Nations information centres website (http://www.un.org/aroundworld/unics), which is to be launched in the fall of 2008, features the publications and other information materials translated by information centres into local languages. Taking advantage of an enhanced translation repository, the new website showcases many translations on a wide variety of

subjects. Translations can be viewed by language, subject, publication or name of information centre. Now available in all six official languages, the site provides links to all newsletters and websites produced by the information centres, including those in local languages, providing a gateway to the work of the centres.

5. Outreach activities

41. The Department has also focused its attention on expanding its partnership with civil society and on innovative ways and means to communicate United Nations messages through non-governmental organizations, educators, students, international celebrities and the private sector.

42. The first annual Department of Public Information/non-governmental organization conference held outside of New York, in Paris from 3 to 5 September, marked the sixtieth anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The programme and activities were conducted in English and French. Discussions with Member States are under way to organize upcoming annual conferences in other locations.

43. The United Nations Cyberschoolbus site has developed a number of specific pages, such as the Millennium Development Goal youth site, available in the six official languages. Interactive features, such as the "Ask the Secretary-General" site, allowed students in 89 countries to ask questions in their own language. A German-language version of the website is being developed with the support of the United Nations Association of Austria, with an expected launch in early 2009. In December, the information centre in Mexico City D.F. will organize the first Latin American regional student conference on human rights at the same time as the event at Headquarters. For the first time the conference will be conducted in English and Spanish.

44. National and academic libraries from the network of depository libraries are gradually becoming valuable outreach partners. Regional workshops organized in Spanish (Santo Domingo, February 2007) and in Russian (Saint Petersburg, Russian Federation, June 2008) have helped extend the outreach capacity of the Department.

45. Guided tours are a very popular means of introducing the United Nations to the general public. Online visitors are provided with fact-sheets and briefing notes in the six official languages.

Duty station	*Languages of guided tours*
Geneva	Bulgarian, Chinese, Czech, English, French, German, Italian, Hungarian, Romanian, Russian, Slovak, Spanish and Turkish
New York	Arabic, English, French, German, Hebrew, Korean, Italian, Japanese, Mandarin, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish and Swedish
Vienna	Chinese, Czech, English, French, German, Hungarian, Italian, Russian, Slovak, Polish, Spanish and Ukrainian

E. Human resources

46. To ensure the success of effective multilingualism within the Secretariat, human resources play a key role. Secretariat job vacancies are published in the two working languages via Galaxy, as are instructions and all other tools designed to facilitate the applications of potential candidates. Information on recruitment policy is available on the Organization's website in the six official languages. All vacancy announcements indicate that French and English are the two working languages of the Secretariat.

47. Competitive examinations for language posts are held regularly in the six official languages, in accordance with the needs of the Organization. Regular meetings are held with the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management to ascertain staffing requirements and draw up corresponding schedules of examinations.

1. Language teaching

48. To encourage and enable Secretariat staff to communicate in all the official languages, a language and communications programme is implemented at the main duty stations.

49. In addition to courses taught at three levels (beginners, intermediate and advanced), specialized workshops on presentations, report writing, simulation of intergovernmental meetings, e-correspondence and linguistic and cultural diversity are held regularly in a number of the official languages. Increasingly, dynamic online and distance-learning programmes are being developed to expand the range and methods of language training offered to staff members at the major duty stations and in the field.

50. At Headquarters and at the United Nations Office at Geneva, courses are given in the six official languages; languages offered at the other offices vary according to their location. While Arabic, English, French and Spanish classes are available at all main offices, Chinese and Russian classes are offered according to the level of interest and demand.

51. Information on the courses offered to staff members is available in several official languages on the different websites set up by the respective Staff Development Services. Some offices enter into contracts with external partners for the provision of language lessons. The number of language learners varies according to duty station (see table 6).

Table 6
Language teaching in Secretariat duty stations: 2007 statistics

	Addis Ababa	*Bangkok*	*Beirut*	*Geneva*	*Nairobi*	*New York*	*Santiago*	*Vienna*
English	222	454	22	298	98	283	71	149
Arabic	46	11	8	80	81	295	5	77
Chinese	0	164	0	59	26	240	0	25
Spanish	17	28	11	228	51	521	11	146
French	206	97	23	566	232	760	41	146
Russian	0	21	0	93	0	203	0	33
Total	**491**	**775**	**64**	**1 324**	**488**	**2 302**	**128**	**576**

52. To facilitate greater integration of staff into local life, courses in local languages are offered at some duty stations, for example: Thai in Bangkok; Kiswahili in Nairobi; and German in Vienna.

53. The incentive programme remains in place for staff in both the Professional and higher categories and the General Service and related categories. Career development and mobility policy measures are an added incentive for staff to learn or improve their knowledge of official and working languages, as language skills will be taken into account in their prospects for career advancement.

54. To encourage the practice of multilingualism, certain Governments offer or sponsor linguistic immersion courses (e.g. summer programmes) for Secretariat staff. These courses usually include a language improvement programme and substantive sessions.

Table 7
Internal Secretariat activities marking the International Year of Languages

Date	*Project*	*Description*	*Results*
March-November 2008	Speaking tables	Lunch time event to practice any of the six official languages	Over 300 staff participated between March-June
March 2008	Maslenitsa, Russian festival	A traditional Russian festival	More than 200 staff participated
April 2008	Chinese culture and language festival	Art festival	Over 200 staff learned more about Chinese culture and language
June 2008	Chinese calligraphy exhibition	Calligraphy exhibition and demo, held in cooperation with the Permanent Mission of China	Over 300 staff participated
24-26 June 2008	Simulation globale de réunion Internationale	Intensive French language three-day workshop simulating a United Nations official meeting in French	21 participants carried out a full meeting under United Nations protocols
June-October 2008	How many languages are spoken at United Nations Headquarters?	Informal survey to collect information on minority and national languages spoken by staff at Headquarters	Over 400 staff have taken part to date
July 2008	Arabic calligraphy exhibition	Exhibition and demonstration of Arabic calligraphy with original artefacts from various Arabic countries	About 400 staff took part

Date	*Project*	*Description*	*Results*
August 2008	Headquarters language learning needs survey	To determine language learning needs of United Nations staff and mission staff and assess existing services	Between 2,000 to 3,000 staff expected to participate
September 2008	United Nations multilingual book club	Senior United Nations staff will recommend books on iSeek	
October 2008	Talk series	Prominent scholars, linguists and authors will share their viewpoints on languages and multiculturalism	
November 2008	Learning English through learning about the United Nations	Internet-based, self-learning course open to the United Nations community. Full pilot online course aims to develop advanced language skills and knowledge of United Nations history, staff and work through a 12-unit online course	

2. Peacekeeping operations

55. Selecting and recruiting a sufficient number of qualified candidates with the necessary technical and language skills, particularly French, remains a difficult task, given the number of operations in French-speaking territories. The four-point strategy aimed at recruiting the best candidates for civilian positions in peacekeeping operations continued as described below.

56. A French version of the Galaxy recruitment website for peacekeeping operations provides information on job vacancies in peacekeeping operations.

57. A dedicated unit that screens applications for field positions is staffed by an English, French and Spanish speaking team, able to work in all official languages. Applications are now screened more effectively and efficiently.

58. A more active policy aimed at identifying candidates has been established. Strong partnerships have been built with Member States, non-governmental organizations and universities. Activities to promote recruitment include: meetings with the French-speaking group; sessions with the Canadian Civilian Reserve, the Centre for Information, Counselling and Training (Cinfo) (Switzerland) and the Association des étudiants en sciences politiques (Paris). Targeted recruitment campaigns continued through the posting of vacancies in such periodicals as *Jeune Afrique*, *The Economist* and *The Wall Street Journal Asia*, as well as on websites such as ReliefWeb, where vacancies can be posted in French and English. A small part of the 2006-2007 budget was earmarked for recruitment dr es carried out in French-speaking countries. In an effort to attract Arabic-speaking andidates for the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UN/ MID), the United

Nations Mission in the Sudan (UNMIS) and the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), the Department for Field Support attended a 2007 job fair in Jordan, considered to be the largest in the Middle East. Notes verbales to French and Arabic-speaking Member States are to be sent by the Department in late 2008.

59. The working group established to ensure deployment of a sufficient number of French-speaking military, police and civil agents in peacekeeping operations continued to meet.

60. Language courses in Arabic, English, French, Spanish, as well as Creole, Kiswahili, Lingala and Swahili are offered at peacekeeping missions.

Table 8
Examples of language courses offered in peacekeeping missions

Mission	*Languages taught*	*Eligibility requirements*
United Nations Integrated Office in Burundi	French English Kiswahili	All
United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic and Chad	French English	All
United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti	French English Spanish Creole	All
United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo	English French Spanish Lingala Swahili	All, including contingents and formed police units
United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire	English French	All
United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan	English	All
United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq	Arabic	All
United Nations Disengagement Observer Force	Arabic	All
United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea	English French	All (no military)
United Nations Mission in Nepal	No current classes — previously Nepali classes	n/a
United Nations Mission in Liberia	English French Arabic	All

Mission	*Languages taught*	*Eligibility requirements*
United Nations Mission in the Sudan	English Arabic	English for nationals Arabic for others
Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process	Arabic	Nationals/Internationals (no United Nations Volunteers/no military)

61. The Integrated Training Service of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations had several meetings with the Organisation internationale de la Francophonie on the use of French in training. The Service has also recruited several French-speaking staff members and five of the six official languages are spoken in the office.

62. The Integrated Training Service has contacted the French Joint Intelligence Service Training Centre in Strasbourg, France, which has agreed to translate general and basic training modules from English into French. This project is in its early stages; the training materials will be translated once latest developments in the doctrine and practices of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations have been finalized. The Integrated Training Service has also published a French-proficiency examination for use as a guide by Member States and Francophone missions. These examinations are designed to assess the knowledge of French of the military observers selected for missions in French-speaking countries.

63. Training in French and English for senior Professional staff of missions was conducted in Nigeria in 2007 for members of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

III. Conclusions

64. In fostering diversity and plurality within the United Nations, efforts to promote multilingualism are vital. The current review shows that, through a number of initiatives, progress has been achieved in the promotion of multilingualism in the areas of conference management, internal communications, public information and outreach as well as in human resources management.

65. The Secretariat continues in its commitment to provide the best possible support to Member States, particularly in their deliberative bodies. The principle of equal treatment for the six official languages, as mandated by the General Assembly, is respected.

66. To ensure that the work and values of the Organization are known and understood by the largest audience, the United Nations relies on traditional media as well as modern technology, and has widened the pool of its partners in support of overall communications strategies.

67. The launch of the International Year of Languages in February 2008 presented an additional opportunity to focus on multilingualism. The extensive programme of activities undertaken to mark the Year, which is covered in a separate report, is expected to have a lasting effect and will foster the mainstreaming of language issues in United Nations programmes and internationally.